

COMPOSITIONS FOR THE DETECTION OF ENZYME ACTIVITY IN BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES AND METHODS OF USE THEREOF

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 The present invention provides for novel reagents whose fluorescence
increases in the presence of particular proteases. The reagents comprise a characteristically
folded peptide backbone each end of which is conjugated to a fluorophore. When the folded
peptide is cleaved, as by digestion with a protease, the fluorophores provide a high intensity
fluorescent signal at a visible wavelength. Because of their high fluorescence signal in the
10 visible wavelengths, these protease indicators are particularly well suited for detection of
protease activity in biological samples, in particular in frozen tissue sections. Thus this
invention also provides for methods of detecting protease activity *in situ* in frozen sections.

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